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Joint Inspection Unit

Safety and security in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Safety and security in the United Nations system" (see A/72/118).

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Summary

In its report entitled "Safety and security in the United Nations system" (see A/72/118), the Joint Inspection Unit assesses the current United Nations safety and security system and its ability to respond to global security challenges. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the security culture, standards, response capability and resources.

The present note reflects the views of organizations of the United Nations system on the recommendations provided in the report. The views have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which welcomed the report and supported some of its conclusions.

I. Introduction

1. In its report entitled "Safety and security in the United Nations system" (see A/72/118), the Joint Inspection Unit assesses the current United Nations safety and security system and its ability to respond to global security challenges. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the security culture, standards, response capability and resources. Its eight recommendations are aimed at addressing gaps and suggesting improvements in the system-wide security and safety mechanism.

II. General comments

2. Organizations of the United Nations system welcome the review of safety and security in the United Nations system undertaken by the Joint Inspection Unit. They note that the report comes at a critical moment for the entire United Nations system, in an environment of increasing direct threats and attacks on a new and larger scale, coupled with the need to operate, on a daily basis, on the front line in conflict zones in order to deliver critical and often life-saving programmes. The review therefore constitutes an important assessment of whether the current United Nations security management system provides an adequate security framework to enable the delivery of United Nations programmes and the protection of personnel.

3. Overall, organizations of the United Nations system express their satisfaction with the report, which contains many useful points for action, along with many relevant and useful recommendations aimed at strengthening safety and security throughout the United Nations system, in five strategic areas: security culture, security-related information management, safety and security standards, security crisis management and surge capacity, and resources and finance.

4. While organizations expressed their satisfaction with the report, they noted several areas in which the report could have been strengthened. It was noted that the objective of the United Nations security management system is to enable the delivery of the United Nations mandate, and while various recommendations relate to security and protective measures, a focus on protection alone is no longer commensurate with the risk and security management approach needed for complex operating environments, which enables, rather than hinders, effective delivery of the United Nations mandate. In that regard, it would have been helpful if more direct reference were made as to how the recommendations enabled humanitarian operations and/or delivering humanitarian assistance, perhaps in a recommendation on how to ensure that the security management system and the Department of Safety and Security further enable the delivery of United Nations humanitarian operations.

5. It was also suggested that a more comprehensive assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the United Nations security management system, in particular whether it provides its key shareholders with value for money, would have been useful, and it was noted that the component was included in the original terms of reference. With regard to financing, it was noted that the hybrid funding of the security management system reflects the diverse and consensual nature of the United Nations system, which at the same time drives the desire of United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes to expect a responsive and client-based service. Some organizations noted that while improvements in the nature of those proposed in the report are certainly welcome, any actions taken to establish a new type of results-based approach to financing the security management system should be made in parallel with the establishment of an improved governance system for the Inter-Agency Security Management Network.

6. Furthermore, it was noted that training is an important component for enhancing staff safety and security, and therefore special attention should be focused on, among other things, the standardization and delivery of security training to personnel and managers performing security functions. It was suggested that this could be in the form of standardized training material for security professionals and United Nations personnel in view of the prevalent security environment, with particular emphasis on updating and revalidating existing security training programmes and developing new ones as needed.

7. With regard to the view of the inspectors on "higher integration of security resources in the context of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network", as noted in paragraph 174 and alluded to in paragraph 184 of the report, while there is agreement on the value of studying lessons learned and best practices resulting from a similar integration project within the United Nations Secretariat, some organizations felt less certain about the value of a similar system-wide project, which might not suit the security needs of the individual organizations or serve the best interests of the United Nations security management system as a whole.

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Executive Heads of United Nations system organizations, through the respective designated officers and in coordination with the Department of Safety and Security and the Office of Legal Affairs, should ensure that, by no later than April 2018:

- **Existing host country agreements within their respective organizations reflect the current security threats and contain commensurate security measures necessary to protect United Nations system organizations' personnel and premises**
- **Future host country agreements contain a security annex reflecting the main responsibility of the host country with respect to the security of United Nations system organizations' personnel and premises**
- **Existing and future host country agreements are regularly reviewed to reflect and adapt to changes in the respective security environments.**

8. Given the paramount importance of the safety and security of their personnel and assets, organizations of the United Nations system support the premise and spirit of recommendation 1 and acknowledge the value in strengthening host country agreements with security responsibilities, as stipulated in the recommendation.

9. However, even though organizations recognize the value of host country bilateral agreements that comprehensively address and assign responsibility for the protection of the personnel and premises of United Nations system organizations from safety and security threats, with several indicating their intention to examine the feasibility of initiating such a process, there were questions as to whether those agreements provided the flexibility needed to respond to fluctuating security environments.

10. It was noted that the recommendation is premised on the assumption that host country arrangements can be updated contemporaneously with changing security situations; as indicated in paragraph 28 of the report, host country agreements, including relevant security provisions, should be "updated regularly" to take account of the specific local security context. Furthermore, the Joint Inspection Unit proposes, in paragraph 29 of the report, that such an update can occur through an

"annex on security", which "could be attached to current and future agreements in order to reflect the changing security environment and the preventive measures necessary to be taken by the parties involved". Since the negotiation and conclusion or amendment of host country agreements depends on the willingness of the host Government to engage in such negotiations, its agreement to ratify a binding international legal document and its completion of ratification procedures, such revisions or "updates", to the extent they are possible at all, may take considerable periods of time and therefore may not address rapidly changing security environments. It was also noted that revisiting existing host country agreements solely in response to changes in the security environment might lead to attempts to renegotiate other provisions contained in those agreements.

11. Therefore, rather than renegotiating existing agreements that do not include specific provisions on the safety and security of United Nations premises and personnel, some organizations rely on the provisions of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, as well as the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and other applicable international instruments.

12. It was also noted that in previous discussions, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network had concluded that rather than renegotiating legal provisions in host country agreements, a more holistic approach should be pursued to ensure security, including enhancements to training, compliance with security policies and procedures and enhanced communication with Member States. That holistic approach was subsequently reflected in chapter II, section E, of the United Nations Security Management System Security Policy Manual, on "Relations with host countries on security issues", which took effect on 15 April 2012 and set out a number of procedures for improving operational security collaboration with host States. The policy approach recognizes that legal instruments alone are not sufficient for ensuring host State support in the protection of the personnel and premises of United Nations system organizations.

13. In addition, it was noted that, if implemented, the recommendation would likely lead to a significant increase in the workload of offices of legal affairs owing to the requirement for the review of hundreds of existing host country agreements going back in time, including for status-of-forces and status-of-mission agreements, United Nations office agreements and conference agreements. Furthermore, once identified, it would be necessary to compare the security provisions of all host country agreements with the prevailing security situation as assessed by the Department of Safety and Security in the country or area concerned. This would also entail significant resources and time. The implementation of the recommendation also carries the risk of creating an unacceptable level of legal uncertainty as it would reopen such a large number of agreements for renegotiation. Furthermore, it is not possible to predict a specific time period within which the negotiations and implementation of such agreements could be concluded, especially since experience has demonstrated that negotiations regarding host country agreements may last years or in some cases continue indefinitely.

14. In the light of the above, while there is recognition of the value of bilateral agreements with host countries that comprehensively address and assign responsibility for the protection of personnel and premises of United Nations system organizations from safety and security threats, there are concerns regarding the feasibility of implementing the recommendation, particularly by the deadline of April 2018, as well as the potential unintended consequences of renegotiating those types of agreements.

Recommendation 2

The Executive Heads of the United Nations system organizations, through the Inter-Agency Security Management Network and the Department of Safety and Security, should ensure that, by no later than January 2018, a comprehensive system-wide policy for road safety is finalized and ready for implementation within each of their respective organizations.

15. Organizations agree on the need for a comprehensive road safety policy, and note that such a policy is in place, having been endorsed by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network and approved by the High-level Committee on Management in 2011. Organizations also note that a working group is currently developing a United Nations road safety strategy, which will draw together existing United Nations policies and will be consistent with the Decade of Action for Road Safety and the Sustainable Development Goals. The strategy is expected to be endorsed by the Network before the end of 2017. It was also noted that road safety is a cross-cutting issue encompassing human resources, fleet management and medical considerations, as well as safety and security. It was therefore suggested that road safety issues also be discussed within the cross-cutting occupational health and safety risk management system, and not only within the security management system, and that all cross-cutting aspects be discussed with other relevant networks and approved by the High-level Committee on Management.

Recommendation 3

The Executive Heads of the United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so should ensure that, by no later than January 2018, appropriate security compliance mechanisms commensurate with the risk level assessed in each particular duty station are included in the individual performance appraisal systems in place for all staff within their respective organizations.

16. While many organizations support the recommendation, some organizations noted that performance appraisals are based on work objectives and are in accordance with the job description, which can include security. In such cases, it was suggested that further security compliance mechanisms might not be required in all cases in all staff performance appraisal systems, and that specific indicators be added, depending on the context and on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation 4

The Department of Safety and Security, in coordination with the Executive Heads of United Nations system organizations and the respective designated officers, should ensure that, by no later than January 2018, evacuation plans are available in every location where those organizations operate, distributed to staff and regularly drilled in coordination, when possible, with local authorities.

17. Organizations support recommendation 4, noting that security planning, including evacuations, and the coordination and implementation of security arrangements in the field are core functions of the Security Management Team, with the support of the Department of Safety and Security, and that the organizations rely on the Department for advice and support at all duty stations.

Recommendation 5

The Executive Heads of the United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so should, by no later than January 2018, incorporate safety and security compliance indicators in the performance assessments at every management level, including senior management.

18. While organizations generally support recommendation 5, with many agreeing on the value of including security in performance assessments, some have some doubts on the value of any additional compliance indicators.

Recommendation 6

The Department of Safety and Security, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, should, by no later than January 2018, strengthen the analysis capabilities of social media and other relevant big data sources by establishing a central location tasked with the regular analysis and system-wide prompt dissemination of security-related information.

19. Organizations of the United Nations system support recommendation 6 and its call for the United Nations system to "strengthen the analysis capabilities of social media and other relevant big data sources". Organizations indicate that they stand ready to work with the Department of Safety and Security through the Inter-Agency Security Management Network to determine the scope, methodology and funding mechanism for the implementation of the recommendation; implementation could take into consideration the inter-office memorandum dated 3 January 2017 from the Secretary-General on strengthened information management, coordination and crisis management.

20. It was noted that in paragraph 81 of the report, which provides the underlying analysis for recommendation 6, the Joint Inspection Unit specifies that the United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre "should be the location for such an undertaking". The Unit, however, goes on to suggest doing so "without prejudice to the fact that different agencies have capabilities and interests in this area and are willing to coordinate and share inputs". It therefore remains unclear how the point regarding the capabilities and interests of different agencies aligns with the call in the recommendation for the establishment of a central location for analysis and dissemination, and whether the Centre has access to the appropriate information or the ability to disseminate it.

21. Furthermore, even if it was agreed that a central facility would be established, and that the United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre, as suggested in the report, is well-placed, both organizationally and functionally, to perform the task, such an undertaking requires a considerable investment in resources, including additional staff, technological platforms and capabilities, as well as capacity-building, for analysis of social media and big data sources. More fundamentally, however, it was suggested by some organizations that in the current budget-constrained environment, more growth at United Nations Headquarters was not viewed as a priority, especially since, it was suggested, the capability was needed largely at the field level.

Recommendation 7

The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, as the Chair of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, should, by no later than January 2018, develop a system-wide security surge policy, including the standard operating procedures necessary, with a view to clarifying surge standing resources and the roles and respective responsibilities of the different actors of the United Nations security management system.

22. Organizations support recommendation 7, noting that surge deployments are currently undertaken on a large scale to provide support in developing crises or changing security environments. The use of surge personnel and assets has been established as an ad hoc response and would benefit from the development of adequate support mechanisms, policies and funding.

23. It was also noted by some organizations that emergency situations are among the most complex faced by the United Nations and require a high level of experience and skills. Therefore, the policy should, among other things, ensure that deployed personnel have the sufficient skills and training to reduce any risk to the delivery of critical programmes (and thereby to populations of concern) and the reputation of the United Nations. Some organizations therefore suggest that the policy could benefit from clarity regarding all parties' accountabilities in emergencies, including ensuring that security personnel are adequate in terms of both quantity and training for the tasks.

Recommendation 8

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with the High-level Committee on Management and CEB and its appropriate networks, a proposal for a safety and security funding model that would provide the Department of Safety and Security with a transparent, sustainable and predictable budget and the flexibility necessary to address unforeseen crises, to be considered during the seventy-second session of the Assembly.

24. Noting that recommendation 8 is directed at the General Assembly, organizations support the revision of the existing funding model for the United Nations security management system, but stress the importance of aligning security resources with the United Nations system organizations (agencies, funds and programmes) that receive the service. Organizations appreciate that the Joint Inspection Unit, in paragraph 191 of the report, recognizes that the entities receiving security services "must be able to assess reasonableness, accuracy and receipt of service and be able to assess and provide feedback on value for money". However, some organizations note that it would have been useful if the Unit could have examined more closely the degree to which the security management system in its current delivery model is meeting the demands of its clients.

25. Organizations also took note of the assertion of the Joint Inspection Unit in paragraph 189 of the report that a unique source of funding would be "simpler to manage than the current cumbersome cost-sharing mechanisms, and would enhance the transparency demanded by agencies, funds and programmes while facilitating accountability with respect to the use of safety and security resources". However, while agreeing that such an arrangement may be simpler, organizations are less clear as to how it would enhance transparency or facilitate accountability with respect to the needs of clients, especially in the light of the view expressed by the General Assembly that "cost-sharing arrangements for field-related security activities are important to ensure that all parties concerned share both ownership of and accountability for the system" (see A/72/118, para. 189).

26. Organizations also note that in paragraph 191 of the report, the Joint Inspection Unit correctly observes that the recosting of jointly funded activities over the course of the biennium "has created certain difficulties for funds, programmes and agencies". Organizations stress the importance of a methodology whereby the budget ceiling is mutually agreed in advance and is not exceeded later as a result of recosting applied by the United Nations or any other reasons. Such a mechanism has been discussed by the United Nations system Finance and Budget Network.